

A Tea-tree Caterpillar.—The caterpillars of the pyralid moth, *Macalla thyrsalis* (Walk.) have caused noticeable damage during the last few years to tea-tree hedges in many areas near Perth.

The fully grown larvae are approximately 31 mm. long. They are light brown in colour with orange-brown heads with dark brown markings. They have dark brown mesal and lateral lines interrupted by lighter coloured areas. A light brown ventral line is apparent. The markings and setal arrangement of the head prothorax, mesothorax, and fourth abdominal segments are sufficiently characteristic to enable these caterpillars to be distinguished from the other West Australian pyralids that have been studied. The size and relative positions of the setae and the disposition of the markings in *Macalla thyrsalis* are illustrated in the figure.



Lateral view of head, prothorax, mesothorax, and fourth abdominal segments of *Macalla thyrsalis* (Walk.). The drawing was made with the aid of a camera lucida.

The caterpillars construct loosely connected nests in which a great deal of their droppings are incorporated. The nests are made in the forks of twigs or branches of the host plant. Many caterpillars live within the same nest and they hide in neatly lined silken tunnels, the middle sections of which are not as firmly constructed as the extremities. When disturbed the caterpillars move forward or backward with about equal facility. They pupate within the nest and usually in the more strongly constructed extremities of the tunnels from which subsequently the empty pupal cases partly protrude.

Observations and breeding studies on the life-history of this insect over a period of two years indicate that there are two generations a year. Later instar larvae and pupae have been found in February, March, April and October, and adults have been observed to emerge during March and April and during October and November.

The moths actually bred from the larvae that were damaging the hedges were forwarded to Mr. I. F. B. Common, C.S.I.R.O., Canberra, to whom I am indebted for the identification.

In addition to attacking the Victorian tea-tree, *Leptospermum laevigatum* (Gaertn.) F. Muell., these caterpillars have been found damaging geraldton wax, *Chamaelaucium uncinatum* Schau.

—L. E. KOCH, Department of Agriculture, Perth.